

RollPlay

GM

NOTEBOOK

ISSUE 13

Text: Adam Koebel

Art Direction/Layout: Daniel at LiveSpace

4 INTRODUCTION

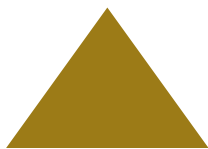
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Welcome, Patrons!

I suspect we've got a bunch of new eyes on the zine this month - welcome to everyone backing at the new level. We're glad to have you! This month doesn't have a lot of direct show related content because of the sea of glorious one shots that made up August this year. You can take the GM away from the game but you can't take the game out of the GM - I've been thinking a lot, on plane rides across the pacific or in panels at GenCon about the cool things we've been doing on RollPlay and some ideas I have for both real and potential futures. I hope you'll enjoy the products of this month's mental wandering!

Thank you so much for your support, and welcome to Issue 13 of the GM's Notebook.

Adam Koebel / RollPlay GM

THE COURT OF CUPS



We've had a chance to view, directly or indirectly, three of the four Courts - some of which we've visited directly, like Wands or Swords, and we've skirted the edges of Coins and seen its influence throughout the campaign, but the Court of Cups remains pretty mysterious. We've had NPCs from its watery domain, but never seen it first hand. I thought, even though we might not go there for a while, if ever, I'd share my thoughts about it - just in case you want to set your own campaign

there, or are just a curious collector of Court of Swords lore.

A Deep History

I've talked before, both on-screen and in the zines, about what came before the Court structures in our campaigns. The structures of the Courts - four who lead, the arcana, the elemental associations - those are all relatively new to the world, in terms of overall history. Human life precedes it, certainly, and there used

to be other ways to access the power of the Fountain and the spirits of the earth. If we were to set the game in the prehistory of the world, before the founding of the courts, I'd definitely increase the number of Druids and Sorcerers and likely outlaw Clerics and Wizards altogether as modern contrivances. In this prehistory, the world was a wilder one, more unpredictable for humanity at every level - metaphysically and literally. Civilization was an invention to create order and stability, but before it, humans interacted with the gods directly - making sacrifices and praying to this particular river or that specific herd. The Fountain was more dangerous, its energy only available to those whose blood was capable of withstanding the danger of trying to wield it. Humans formed the Courts to control that power, to understand their place as a larger whole in the universe, and to regiment themselves against the danger of the Mara (though there's debate, in-universe, about what came first - the Arcana to protect humanity from the Mara or the Mara as a response to the shackling belief structures of the Arcana). In places like the Court of Coins, this is all academic and historical, because on the mainland, the Bureaucracy of Heaven interacts with humanity only indirectly and man has a pretty





solid handle on things, as far as ontological day-to-day activity goes. This is less true in the archipelagos of the Court of Cups.

This isn't to say that the Court of Cups is a demon-haunted wasteland or anything, but there are absolutely places among the islands where the stability and structure present in most of the rest of the world is less obviously at work. In the majority of the Court of Cups, the structures of the Arcana are observed. Even on the smaller islands there are shrines to the Moon, and priests of the Sun who bid him fair sleep as he descends below the waves. However, more than anywhere else in the world, there are those who either never embraced the new ways, or who reject it outright as a disconnection from their intimate ties to the world. In the Court of Cups, one is more likely to find a village who still placate the spirits of the sky and sea directly, with sacrifice and prayer, with song and ritual. In the western court, cultures are encouraged to listen to their feelings first and to the words of the priests and functionaries of the east second. A strange kind of synthesis between the old and new exists among the archipelagos, and each island chain has its own combination of rituals and practices, fuelled by the spirit

and heart of the people.

The Cup-as-Heart

As with the other Courts, the spirit of their people and culture comes from the mystical alignment with a particular suit in the tarot. Whether this cultural predilection is magical in nature (the world itself actually having five “states” of energy and propagating that energy to the people closest to the magical sources thereof) or simply a cultural self-affirming prophecy (children raised in the Court of Swords are encouraged to learn to fight and think for themselves, for instance) hardly matters except to scholars. There are common traits and qualities of those who are raised in and live among the varied archipelagos, and those traits are tied intimately to the suit of Cups.

The suit of Cups carries with it a connotation of emotional connection. Folk in the Court of Cups are taught to embrace and understand their feelings. Someone raised there, regardless of their alignment, are taught that their emotional responses to the world are of paramount importance - to be paid close attention to and understood. What ultimately drives a Court of Cups citizen may vary,

their motivations are as broadly spread out as any other peoples’, but it will be informed at the very least by how that citizen feels. As a result, their relationships with one another are often highly important. Not only the familial responsibility that we might see in the Court of Coins, or the pack mentality of soldiers in the Court of Swords, but all kinds of relationships are meaningful to the folk of the Court of Cups. Families, lovers, friends and allies, as well as enemies and rivals - all take a strong place in their lives. It is said, in the Court of Cups, that one is best judged not by their deeds or thoughts, but by those who are closest to them - by understanding one’s connections one can understand a person best.

As a direct result, in the Court of Cups, social activities are of supreme importance. Parties, weddings, funerals, feasts and galas are commonplace, each taking on the flavour and tenor of the specific island culture they spring from. Rare is the introvert in the Court of Cups, but those who prefer to be alone are not shunned or reviled, generally - they are said to be focused on the most important relationship - that which one has with oneself. Even so, the Court tends to be made up of closely linked groups of friends and

family, and to be invited into such a unit, especially as a foreigner, is an exceptional gift.

Civilization and Beyond

The Court of Cups, as a series of hundreds of broken-up island chains, is less capable of supporting a “city” in the traditional sense. Some of the larger islands, certainly, have settlements of considerable size, but nothing reaching any sort of metropolitan size. Instead, villages and fleets of ships make up the majority of the places one might find folk in the Court of Cups. Many people in the Court have no permanent homes, instead finding themselves a part of a civilization of ships, where the King and Queen serve as Captain and Commander instead. These fleets vary in size, and folks come and go - ships joining and leaving the fleet over time. A brisk tradition of inter-island trade is supported by these fleet towns, and they tend to travel according to a seasonal cycle, though there are some whose appearance is, by all accounts, totally random. It can be very difficult to track someone down, here, and joining a fleet town is a common practice for those attempting to escape trouble or bad luck in the other Courts.

There are a few sites among the islands that date back almost as long as the founding of the City of Brass, but they tend to be sacred, rather than settlements. Ruins, ancient and strange. Islands made of singing crystal, coral that writhes and hums, strange places where old spirits still dwell, having - like some of the inhabitants of the islands - rejected the Bureaucracy of Heaven and living instead corporeal lives in the earth. These ancient gods take the shape of enormous sea beasts or living storms, great and terrible, and they attract, without fail, fools seeking to worship or defeat them - for glory or rumored gold accumulated in sea-cave lairs or trapped by magic beneath the waves. The further one voyages East, the more sparse the islands become and the more atavistic their people, until the last vestiges of civilization are a handful of rocky islands peopled by tribes untouched by the ways of the Courts at all, until even beyond lies a trackless sea. Though it’s said that sailing East long and far enough brings one to a golden shore, a paradise undreamed of. Though, if it exists, none have ever returned from it.

Inspirations

When I sit down to think about the

styles of the people of the Court of Cups, I'm drawn particularly to a few of our own island dwelling people. I think we've seen a load of Polynesian-inspired fantasy, and I definitely want to reflect some of that in the warmer parts of the Court of Cups but I'm more drawn elsewhere since the cultures of the game tend to be predominantly influenced by Asian cultures to begin with. To this end, if the players were to visit the Court of Cups, I'd dig my teeth into the prehistory and history of the Phillipines as well as touching on the Ainu and Aleut cultures. I envision the Court as covering a vast space and variety of climates - there are frigid islands with whale and seal hunters and there are warmer seas with sharks and tropical fish. While the Court of Coins is the largest of the Courts, Cups covers more space, and as such, offers a lot of options for inspiration.

The obvious inspiration here is Japan, but I definitely want to steer away from that. The world is full of badly done Japanese-analogs, and

I don't want to contribute to that. Besides, the people who came before the modern Japanese - the Ainu, the Jomon, etc. are a good opportunity for something we haven't seen much in fantasy before. Ancient Korea, maybe, but likely more as a part of the Court of Coins - the part that borders the Court of Cups, I think.

One novel that leaps to mind when I think about interconnected ships and fleets serving as towns is the China Mieville novel *The Scar*. Mieville has come up before as an inspiration for me and Court of Swords - *Perdido Street Station* is a major influence on my ideas of the City of Brass.

While it's all theory - we haven't visited these lands, I think it's nice to have an idea of what it might be like, and to hint at those ideas by way of NPCs and cultural artifacts that have made their way west into the world.

FATE!

COMPELLING PLAY

I get a lot of questions about how to run Fate. Folks ask me about how I do prep, or how to create interesting Aspects, or how to handle choosing difficulty for rolls in the game. More than anything else, the questions I get are about Compels. They're the part of the game that is maybe the hardest to understand, handle and

integrate smoothly onto the table, and I get enough questions about them that I wanted to take some of this space to put on my advisor hat and try to help out some of the fledging Fate: Accelerated game masters out there get the best use out of Compels.

Here's the text, modified slightly from the Fate Accelerated SRD, explaining what they are and how they work.

Compelling Aspects

If you're in a situation where having or being around a certain aspect means your character's life is more dramatic or complicated, anyone can Compel the aspect. You can even Compel it on yourself—that's called a self-Compel. Compels are the most common way for players to earn more fate points.

There are two types of Compels.

Decision Compels: This sort of Compel suggests the answer to a decision your character has to make. If your character is a Disgusting Coward, for example, you may need to flee from a frightening situation, instead of standing your ground. Or if you are a Hacker Jacker, maybe you can't help but disassemble the machinery before you, even if it belongs to the Imperium.

Event Compels: Other times a Compel reflects something happening that makes life more complicated for you. If you're Le Freak, of course you have a disgruntled ex in this port. If you're a Happy Go Lucky Elaxetronian, you might run into someone who has it in for robots.

In any case, when an aspect is Compelled against you, the person Compelling it offers you a fate point and suggests that the aspect has a certain effect—that you'll make a certain decision or that a particular event will occur. You can discuss it back and forth, proposing tweaks or changes to the suggested Compel. After a moment or two, you need to decide whether to accept the Compel. If you agree, you take the fate point and your character makes the suggested decision or the event happens. If you refuse, you must pay a fate point from your own supply.

What makes Compels challenging is that they run counter to a lot of what we're taught to expect in a roleplaying game. For one, they short circuit authorship in the game - by using our Fate points, we can suggest that perhaps, a character we don't control, makes a decision that we've authored. "Your character would totally do this" becomes more than a friendly suggestion, it has power behind it that can nudge you in that direction. Secondly, Compels can blur the line between GM and player. Traditionally, a player who suggests "wouldn't it be cool if the Minghassi Imperium showed up, just now, because you've got Thorn in the Side of the Duke" would be met with a nod and a smile, maybe the GM would agree and go with it, but there's no reason the GM would be pressured to go along with that idea.

I think a lot of games (and a lot of the best GMs) tend to allow a loose form of this sort of thing in their games regardless - you'll see games in the Powered by the Apocalypse family invite the GM to ask questions and build on the answers of the players. If you want to see a good non-mechanical form of this play in action, watch

Jerry in the Tales from the Loop one shot we did. Tons of "what if this happened" going on there. What Fate does, though, is work that kind of communal, collaborative, authority shifting play directly into the reward and economic structure of play. It's not about asking the GM or another player permission to move the story in a particular way, it's about incentivizing, mechanically, each player to take a directorial role in the story. Fate, more than most games, asks the players to look not just at what their character would do but what the world at large is doing and what the characters moving around in it would and should do. It treats the players less like actors and more like writers of a communal story. (If you're curious about the way games treat players and the idea of varying stance and role responsibilities, hit up Issue Four). This kind of thing can be scary for GMs who like to have a little more control over what happens when, or players who are afraid someone is going to make their character do something silly or stupid.

There are three things I generally point to in an effort to help players understand that Compels

aren't the worrying screw-you to player agency over their characters. The first is that the Compel system is a part of a larger economy. It's not just about whoever is loudest or has the best ideas. We do not, generally, force Compels. We offer them. When I say "Wouldn't it be fun if..." I'm doing so while offering up a Fate Point and asking the player "would you like this?" They can (almost) always say "no, thank you" and carry on as they were. This is a fair and reasonable response, and built into the rules of the game. What if they have no Fate points? We'll talk about that in a second. The second thing that bolsters Compels is that they are intimately tied to your Aspects. When someone offers to change the story, it's not just at random, it's changing it around the fulcrum of your character. It's acknowledging and interpreting the very real flags you've set for your character and, in a way, paying homage to

that. If a player seems to be misinterpreting your Aspect, you're able (and encouraged) to say "I think you're seeing that Aspect wrong". This kind of conversation, short though it often may be, is a great way to learn more about the character. If people are interpreting your Aspects one way and you another, a misfired Compel can be a great way to get at that. Thirdly, and this is more a social-level interaction, Compels ought not be there to bull-rush or steamroll a player. We use them with grace and care, even when someone doesn't have any Fate points because we, as players, want to have a good time together, and in my mind, that trumps all the other stuff that's happening in a Compel. If someone offers you a Compel that seems frustrating, gross or just out of character, you should say so! Encourage them to try it another way.

Compelling Well

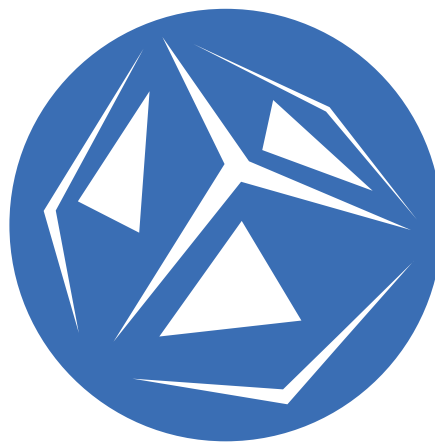
Here are a few things that I think make up a good Compel.

- They advance the narrative of the game in an interesting way. Compels are there to make everyone at the table excited about the new direction the moment or scene is about to go.
- They illustrate an understanding of the character being Compelled. The very best can make a player take a step back and say "Oh, I never realized that!" If you can surprise a player with an insight about their character, you're absolutely doing it right. A well-aimed Compel actually feels really good for both parties, because it's a way of showing your fellow players you're picking up what they're laying down.

- They feel like an opportunity for the character in question to respond or do something cool. They're an invitation, not a shut-down. I hate Compels that invoke negation. I want all my Compels to be inspiring and to create powerful momentum. If they're not doing that, they fall flat, for me.

The fear that Compels means everyone else is getting to run your character is a real one, and with the wrong group, that can absolutely feel like the result, but if your players can get behind the idea that Compels exist as a way to bolster and boost the action of the game, and y'all can take a bit of step back from the protective feelings that we can sometimes get around authorship of our characters, a good Compel can feel incredibly reaffirming and can be fun to engage with.

If that's something your group can get on board with, Fate might be a good fit for you. After that, you can work on practicing. Taking a Compel might create a tough situation for your character, but it should never feel like punishment. Reading the table, figuring out what kinds of action people like and letting the system do its job will lead you to the right sort of play.



RollPlay

ESSAY: FAN INTERACTION IN RPGS

Part of what makes media of all sorts compelling is our ability to engage with it. Not just in the consumption of the thing we love - watching the show, reading the book, etc - but in the discussion thereafter and the ways that we can be inspired by the cool things we see on page and

screen. In the time I've been doing RPGs for RollPlay, I've seen some really amazing stuff come out of the fan community - drawings and paintings of characters and scenes, songs inspired by the themes of a game. Stories about places we've seen and conversations about the

characters and their choices. It's all wonderful stuff, absolutely. I think, though, we're in a unique position as creating a functionally improvised fiction, to integrate that fan interaction even more. In a way that's deeper or more meaningful not just to the fans themselves, creating and discussing, but to the story of our games - to the world itself. I've been watching a lot of RPG shows on Twitch since I first got started in the space, and I think we can divide the efforts to integrate fan content into a few main categories, to understand where we're at, as a hobby and as a form of entertainment.

RPG Voyeurism

This, I think, might be the most common form of RPG fan interaction model. In this mode, we see games being played more or less as if they were offline. The audience is a fly on the proverbial wall, and the players act as though they are not there, for the most part. These games tend to run precisely the way they would if there were no audience at all and, as such, have no direct interaction with an audience. All the fan interaction takes place between the episodes of the show - fan art shared within the community and shared with the cast, and while it may influence the

game in an indirect way, it isn't a part of the game itself. I think this is probably the most common mode because it's so easy to do. Turn on the cameras and play the game, don't look at chat and just do what you've always done. In a lot of ways, it's the most honest in a sense because there's no obvious, intentional effort to play to the audience. By that same token, it's also the most limited, because it doesn't take advantage of the medium in any way. Chat might as well not exist. It's traditional in both the RPG sense and in the media sense - it might as well be a scripted TV show and not live to an audience at all. It's safe, certainly, and comfortable.

Asynchronous Influence

In a slightly more fan-influenced mode, you'll find what I think most of RollPlay does. We are aware of the presence of a sort of sixth player at the table, albeit one who is running on a seven second delay, but a presence nonetheless. Jokes are made directly to chat, or references made knowing that our audience will respond. We interact in varying ways depending on player preference - some players will take ideas directly from chat, others keep chat closed except on breaks - but

we all know and acknowledge that our audience exists. As a GM, the biggest influence that fans have on my games tends to be either in the moment rules corrections (because despite our griping, having several thousand people offering up page references when we mix up a rule is super helpful most of the time) or impromptu gameplay suggestions (there have been narrative elements both large and small i've cribbed from a comment in chat, absolutely). I think this hybrid approach is useful, but informal - there are still no structures in place to take advantage of the audience and their engagement. Fan art and stories might make their way into the game, but a fan has no way to be assured that their contribution will make it. This assures the GM that they are in control of their world and they players that they are in control of their character, but if an idea comes from chat loud enough or interesting enough to catch someone's attention, it might steer the ship of the game in a particular direction.

RPG as Game Show

In a number of channels, a style of gameplay has emerged that treats

fan interaction in a very direct, specific way. The ability of fans to use things like follows, subscriptions and donations to impact play on a large or small scale has emerged in a number of games, creating a type of RPG entertainment I tend to look at as more like a game show than traditional modes of storytelling. These games tend to be high energy, with lots of impact from the audience - often tying donations and subscriptions to boosts to individual characters and bending or changing encounters based on fan decisions. I think that there are lots of ways to get at this, and there's some very interesting stuff there, but it's a very volatile space. I, personally, would find this model intensely difficult to GM, but I think it can absolutely be done in a way that's fun and entertaining. Right now, I think this is the most direct a fan can impact a show - literally buying potions for characters or impacting the actions of monsters or NPCs in the game.

In the future, hopefully not the too-distant future, game systems will start to take into account the audience role, giving them things to do and ways to interact with the fiction that flow naturally with the existing structures of the

game. Right now, whether we're a game show style campaign or only interacting with the fans between shows, we're all playing our games without any design support. I'm fascinated to see what comes next and in the interim, am always looking for cool ways to incorporate fan engagement in my games. Whether turning over rewards to chat (like in *Mirrorshades*) or treating our audience like an in-fiction group (like in *World Wide Wrestling*) I

want to find ways to bend the games we're already playing to incorporate the cool things my audience is interested in.

In the next piece, I attempt to lay out some proto-concepts for turning the *Swan Song Faction Turn* into a fan-driven communal effort. This sort of thing is fascinating for me and I hope you'll find it interesting, too!



STARS WITHOUT NUMBER:

FAN-DRIVEN FACTIONS

We played Stars Without Number a whole lot. We built a huge world together and, in Swan Song, explored just about every corner of Sector Asgard Sigma. Powering the behind-the-scenes action in that game is the Faction Turn, a way to know whether or not that squad of Cyberninja sent by the Madari Syndicate would assassinate the Pfortenhauer officer on Onintza. It was a way to take uncertainty out of the world, take GM fiat out of the picture and give us some sense of momentum from month-to-month in the game world. It's still

my favourite part of Swan Song, and while I was able to get fan interaction and feedback during the faction turns, ultimately the audience was just that - a passive element able to ask for influence but never entitled to it.

It's been a while since then, and I've had lots of time to think about how I'd do it differently. We've got some new tools and I think, with a little work and practice, we could set up a structure whereby the audience of the show could effectively join or participate in the Faction Turn.

- At the start of the campaign, devise a set of starting Factions. Instead of following the usual rules for creating Faction size, establish the general character of the Faction. Create a brief that explains their tags, their interests and the type of Faction you expect them to be (religious, corporation, governmental, etc.)
- Using a community communication platform (Discord, for example) set up separate conversational spaces for each Faction. Create two roles for each faction - one a "participant" role and the other a "chairperson" role.
- Post a video running down all the details of each Faction and end it inviting subscribers to the channel to join a specific Faction - each

sub is allowed to join one Faction and one Faction only, and are given access to the channels for that faction, as well, perhaps, as a more general conversational space

- Add each subscriber to their appropriate faction, instructing the factions to elect by whatever means they prefer, a chairperson - someone who will speak for the Faction.
- Stat the Factions according to their population
- Prior to any given Faction turn, the Chairpersons will submit the orders for their Faction - the type of turn they'll take, where attacks will occur, etc.
- The GM follows the Faction Turn as usual, using the submitted orders from the Chairperson of that Faction
- Subscribers should be given the ability to move Factions - to defect - on a limited basis. This defection can and should affect the stats of the Faction
- Faction credits could be used to affect the in-game, as well - hiring assets to aid or hinder the PCs in play, but those would be effectively out of control of the Faction once purchased - the GM would have to act in the good faith according to the will of the Faction and honor their cred spent

I think this would be a really fun way to turn control over to the fans of the show, and would be a neat way to retain GM and player control over the world itself while giving up some of the bigger power to the audience. I can imagine a world in which the narrative takes some very interesting turns because of the Faction Turn or where the Chairperson can hire assassins to try and take out the PCs because

they've nuked a base of the Faction, etc. I feel like my goal would be to create a system that I myself would be invested in and this feels like the beginning of that.

It's just the first few thoughts, but if we were to play SWN again, I know I'd want to implement this. I promise I'll hold a design stream if we get there, and I'd love your feedback.

Transmission Intercepted 4G55GG3TY

SWAN SONG

"We belong to you, right?"

– Wilbur Higgins III

Swan Song: Episode x Pi Asks: "Where is Viktor Kovacs?" etc... BROTHER

Jean-Jacque Provost

When we start up, the Swan Song is in low orbit over Elouhaba. Commander ~~Jean-Jacquet~~ is aboard the Swan, along with the crew, minus Viktor Kovacs, RIP. On the planet, assets of deep cover Perimeter Agent Aaron Meyer are dispersing and will be debriefed soon. Open on Provost explaining the situation.

- ① They are members of the Order of Annunciation, a military unit from Cabral who operate throughout the sector to protect and guide the growth of Artificial Intelligences. They've been monitoring the Swan Song for some time.
- ② They do not wish to take L'enfant from their family, nor do they believe that they can control it. "God has a plan for this ship, and for you." but they are His shepherds, and want to help. One of their Agents would like to join the crew, to protect and assist the Swan Song.
- ③ He can tell them only what he knows, only what is safe. If they want to know more, come to Cabral and meet with Odette (the Brigadier General)
- ④ They will take the Swan to Taxila, but cannot further interfere. God's will must not be interfered with.



[FRENCH STEVEN!]

Quest Log

- ① Get paid by Anaximander University (10,000 but also where is the gear?!)
 - ② Go to Cabral, meet with Odette (who wants to send them to Andoni)
 - ③ Smuggle shit (stolen mining stuff) for Heather Montsay (40,000)
 - ④ Avoid Madari bounty hunters on Taxila (50,000)
 - ⑤ Avoid Perimeter Agency Assassins
 - ⑥ Meet with Mr. Falcon re: the situation on Onintza
- ↳ Also take refugees home for \$\$\$\$ (60,000)
- Titen on the way.
Sunbeam = OK

the Order has ties to the Apostles of the Ghost-Light, the inner circle of mystics that serve Le Fantome directly. They've given the order one of their resurrection chambers, a sleek object, coffin-sized and matte w/ "Job 14:14" on the side. It can grow, albeit slowly, human body replacements to restore backed-up consciousness...

The Swan Song is 2 months behind on payment, they get a call from Sunbeam being all "where's the money, let us talk to Viktor, we're sending someone..." PAID

- the Order / the Cabralesse gov't wants to maintain control and oversight
- Le Fantome wants to integrate and absorb other powerful AI cores and control Cabral more directly

Other AI Names

- the Hermit
- the ~~Tower~~ **ROCK**
- the Chariot
- Le Fantomê (aka the Empress)

- * Add "La Fantomê" as a Faction (Assets include Order of Annunciation, Cabral Gov't, etc.)
- * Add "the Perimeter Agency" as a Faction
- * Do A FACTION TURN SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21st to get caught up.

People Interested In the Party

- ① Madari, for what happened on Subhadra (plus Kalsya Biza, for Pandya)
- ② Anaximander, for Subhadra
- ③ Andonian Cultural Defense Force (for murder)
- ④ Mr. Titen, for revenge
- ⑤ Odette / Le Fantome, for Pi
- ⑥ Perimeter Agency, also for Pi

Swan Song GM Notes

Commentary

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Where is Viktor Kovacs?

Our very first death on the show, and more than just a death, an opportunity to explore the themes of mortality and human life - something that Pi would remember for a long time. It's hard to explain loss to a child, especially if that child is an inhuman artificial intelligence.

The Order of Annunciation

The Annunciation is the arrival of the angels to Mary saying unto her "yo gurl you're pregante and it's gonna be the Jesus" I named my order of Cabralese this because their function is to do more or less the same. Only Higgs is Mary in this situation and the Swan Song is the womb? Look, analogies are hard, ok? My goal here was giving Steven's new character, Prosper Trudeau, a vector onto the ship and to offer the crew a chance to make a new ally. That, and I had the idea that there'd be some tension there - the Cabralese are authoritarian leaning and we all know the crew to be a bunch of anarchistic chaos magnets. I think it worked out pretty good, in the end.

FRENCH STEVEN

You know, I was just as excited about it as you were.

The Apostles of the Ghost-Light

I feel like it went under-noticed that the Cabraleses have literal reincarnation technology. I don't know that the PCs ever saw this directly in action [as it was mainly a cut scene thing] but Prosper definitely would have had some idea that La Fantome could bring people back to life. Job 14:14 reads - "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." I have this very ominous idea of what the Apostles are like, ancient undying revived over-and-over monks of a powerful AI, cybernetic almost beyond human recognition. Creepy stuff.

Other AI Names

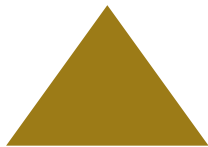
As you all know, I like archetypal mythologies - Jungian stuff, the tarot, the zodiac, etc. I think it's neat the way we pattern our heroes and gods into pantheons. I'd more fully flesh this out and explore it in Court of Swords, obviously, but I had this idea that a fractured, altered example of the tarot was important to the Cabraleses. The various AI in the sector being assigned major arcana, the ships of the fleet named after the various cards in the tarot.

People Interested in the Party

This was always top of mind for me, knowing who gave a shit about the characters and for what reason. Motivated antagonists are the best antagonists.

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